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ABSTRACT

Several things need to be considered when designing a bilingual curriculum for and with the Navajo community. The major consideration should be the involvement of Navajo parents and the leadership of Navajo school boards. The curriculum should be developed from the Navajo point of view about their world. Designers of a bilingual education curriculum also need to consider the: (1) community's makeup, aspirations, goals, and needs; (2) skills, attitudes, values, and goals which the community desires for its students; (3) school community relationship; (4) school's relationship with external agencies (i.e., the State, Tribe, Bureau of Indian Affairs); and (5) Tribe's attitude toward bilingual bicultural education. Curriculum designers should have some data which reflect the bilingual program's intensity; whether this intensity would require them to reflect a goal of uniliterateness or promote biliterateness; and whether the program and, therefore, the curriculum would promote full bilingualism. When designing the curriculum, the Navajo calendar, importance of the home, cultural behavior differences, and teacher qualifications must be taken into account. This paper focuses on the educational process developed within the Rough Rock Demonstration School, a community based educational program on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona. (NQ)



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9:20 AM, Anita Bradley Pfeiffer (University of New Mexico)

DESIGNING A BILINGUAL CURRICULUM

I am pleased and honored to be given the opportunity to participate in this distinguished gathering.

This discussion will concentrate and focus on the educational process as it developed within a community based educational program on the Navajo Reservation. The setting to which I refer is the Rough Rock Demonstration School, located in northeastern Arizona, where I had the opportunity to work for five years, from the school's inception in 1966 + 1971.

The insights and knowledge gained at Rough Rock, as well as subsequent work and thought given to related topics during graduate studies will provide the basic framework from which I shall draw in discussing the topic of this paper.

Rather than present an exhaustive collage from the voluminous studies conducted by behavioral scientists over the past four decades on the Navajo. I will mention only a few salient features; namely that linguistic structure, family relations, religious values and spacial utilizations, of the Navajo people do not mirror those of the predominant western European heritage of mainstream America. Comparisons, however, do persist, based I believe on the wish-fulfilling assimilationist dogma.

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Nearly a third of the entire Navajo adult population are functional illiterates in English.¹ Eighty-six percent (86%) of the six year old Navajo children entered Bureau of Indian Affairs schools in 1970 with no speaking knowledge of English; a lower figure of fifty-one percent (51%) of six year olds, entered Public Schools with no speaking language of English in the same year.²

Before we discuss designing a bilingual curriculum we need to remember the functions of a school, namely 1) the instructional process and 2) the socialization aspect of the school. It is usually assumed that the purpose of the school is to increase the information base, develop the cognitive and physical skills of the child. That is to say, to develop the literacy, computational, conceptual and manual skills of the child. The socialization process develops in part through the internalization of expectations, reflecting attitudes, values and beliefs instilled in an attempt to foster compatible interaction with others of the society and to utilize ones cognitive and physical skills in effective, socially approved ways.

If a school is interested in high academic success for its students, there needs to be an on going exchange and relationship with the community working in this vital, creative

¹ Report of the Special Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education, Indian Education: A National Tragedy--Challenge, 1969

² Spolsky, Bernard, Navajo Reading Study, Navajo Language Maintenance II: Six-Years-Olds in 1970, University of New Mexico, August, 1971.

partnership for the well being of the children and adults. Such a coalition aims at restructuring the relationships between the school and the community, between members of the instructional team itself, and between school personnel and students.³ The heart of designing a bilingual curriculum, for and with a Navajo Community, lies in the involvement of Navajo parents and the leadership of Navajo School School Boards.

The Rough Rock Community's concept of educational focused on two major premises:

- That, the Rough Rock Demonstration School will be guided by the philosophy that the Indian can, and should be educated to maintain his identity, i.e., his native values and culture, while at the same time learning to master the Anglo culture and to take his place in the Anglo world, is he so desires.⁴

The desire has been to establish an educational system which will provide the optimal environment for learning. The products of which should be individuals who are most able to carry the major economic, political and ethical responsibilities of their community or society; individuals who have the skills, knowledge, attitudes, values and specific mastery of behavior patterns appropriate to both Navajo and Anglo cultures.

³ Rubinstein, Annette T, Schools Against Children, Monthly Review Press, New York, p.211, 1970

⁴ Johnson, Broderick H, Navajo Education at Rough Rock, p.15, Rough Rock Demonstration School, 1968.

The form and content of schooling, for the vast majority of other schools serving Navajos, is essentially the same model of education developed for and consumed by mainstream American. This imposed educational system is a very real and serious detriment to the development of Navajo education. Navajo children are taught in a foreign language; they are taught concepts which are foreign; they are taught values which are foreign; they are taught lifestyles which are foreign; and they are taught by human models who are foreign. The reason for this kind of schooling is to mold the Navajo child (through speech, action, thought) to be like members of the predominant Anglo-Saxon mainstream culture; The apparent assumption seemingly being that people of other ethnic groups cannot be humans unless they can speak English, and behave according to the values of a capitalistic society based on competition and schievement.

The children grow up in these schools with a sense of:

- 1) confusion regarding the values, attitudes and behavior taught at school and the values, attitudes and behavior taught at home.
- 2) loss of self-identity and pride concerning their personhood, Navajoness.
- 3) failure regarding classroom learning activities.
- 4) loss of their own Navajo language development and loss of indepth knowledge of their own Navajo culture.

Bruner aply stated the crisis when the wrote, "that (Traditional American) education cripples the capacity of children in the lowest socio-economic quarter of the population to participate at full power in society, and does so effectively at an early age."⁵

We must design the curriculum to reflect our knowledge of where the child is, a knowledge of the community's child-rearing practice so as to better design the instructional program according to the behavior of the learners. Navajo curriculum should be developed from the Navajo point of view about their world. There is an order to the world view of Navajos, which is essential to the survival and maintainence of Navajo lives.

The coalition to which I made earlier reference) must provide the child with a curriculum and with a environment in which he can develop intellectual curiosity, which the child has begun to develop even before his arrival at school.

For Navajo Education, such a curriculum design needs to be articulated and written in the language of the child. The child's first and often only language is the essential vehicle for him in expressing his personality, relating to his family and peer group, and exploring the outside world. Thus, the language used to continue to foster the child's self-esteem in his language and, reflects his culture.

All I am saying is that the Navajo Child be given equal opportunity and access to increasing and strengthening his "why

⁵ Bruner, Jerome S., The Relevance of Education, New York W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971, p. xi.

of life". "There should be no "either/or (Navajo or English) choice, but rather a "both/and" approach".⁶ In such an approach BOTH the Navajo and predominantly European American's views of life; both Navajo and English languages are utilized in the curriculum AND the choice of how a Navajo person is to live is quite correctly, I believe, left up to the individual who has acquired two sets of tools in becoming a "balanced bilingual" and we might say a "balanced bicultural" person. If the person decides to live and work on the Navajo reservation that's fine. If the person decides to live and work in a dominant society's community that's fine. My own prediction is that the person will, alterantly, live in both world, using both languages, in part dependant upon the person's work, and desire to function in whichever society makes the individual more satisfied. The result of the both/and approach is that the person will acquire the necessary tools to assist in making choices as to living in two distinctly different society where he can be a happy productive citizen.

The second premise, upon which Rough Rock has based their education is that the Rough Rock Demonstration School is controlled and directed by the Navajo people themselves; and the supremely important aspect of this local control has proven that Navajo have the interest, desire and capacity to provide real leadership, direction and self-determination in education.

⁶ A Bilingual Educationa Proposal for Rough Rock Demonstration School, Rough Rock, Arizona, March 27, 1969.

The school was founded on the thesis that the Navajo is best able to determine the content and direction of Navajo education. In other words, the school is demonstrating that the authority and responsibility for the education of the Navajo must be given to the Navajo.⁷

This is not to say that school employees should have no input into the development of the school's future. The community needs the assistance of its employees to verbalize and refine what it is the community desires as goals in the educational process, while the teachers and administrators need the assistance of the community in identifying knowledgeable people from the community to assist in the curriculum materials development of the school. The community can provide knowledgeable people to teach history and culture in the classrooms as well as provide necessary information needed in the design of the curriculum. The community can provide reinforcement in the pursuit of the goals and objectives as cooperatively defined both by the community and school employees.

In designing a curriculum for bilingual education the designers of the curriculum need to consider several important conditions:

- 1) What is the makeup of the community? Are they monolingual speakers or are they bilingual speakers?
- 2) What are the aspirations, goals and needs of that community?

⁷Ibid, p. 15.

- 3) What skills, attitudes, values and goals does the community desire for tis students?
- 4) What is the relationship of the school with the community?
- 5) What is the relationship of the school with external agencies, such as the State, Tribe, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Education in Department of Health Education and Welfare, etc.
- 6) What is the Tribe's attitude towards bilingual/bicultural education?

If an exploration and study is made of the questions posed the designers of the curriculum for bilingual education should have some data which reflects (as articulated by Fishman)⁸

- A) the intensity of the bilingual program, that is to say, whether the curriculum design will be established to reflect a transitional program in which the children will use their mother tongue as the media of instruction until they can switch to the other language at which time their home language is eliminated.
- B) whether the intensity of the bilingual program would require the curriculum designers to reflect a goal of uniliterateness, that is to say to become literate only in the language of the dominant society.

⁸ Fishman, Joshua, Lecture given at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, November 12, 1974.

- C) whether the intensity of the bilingual program would promote biliterateness, that is to become proficient writers in both languages.
- D) and finally whether the bilingual program and therefore the curriculum would promote full bilingualism for the consumers of the program.

It goes without saying the bilingualism cannot flourish and grow unless the child is surrounded with aspects of his culture in which he can develop his self-identity and in which he can begin to establish the foundation in gaining and intensifying his intellual curiosity about the world around him. The Coleman report⁹ found that a child's sense of control over his environment and self-image correlates highly with school achievement.

In designing a bilingual curriculum for and with a community, the calendar of the Navajos must be taken into consideration. Rigid school calendars do not fit Navajo lifestyle. For example, Navajo religious everday activities concern and involve all the members of the family and permeate the daily life of individuals. There is constant interaction between the adults and children. Further, there are not buildings erected to worship in, and then only on certain days. Rather, the hogan (the home) is the shrine, and major religious activities occur within it. This is where

⁹Coleman, James, Equality of Educational Opportunity, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1966, No. OE 38001

The Navajo youngster develops and refines his knowledge of the Navajo Code of life (Dine ba niilyaii and Dine yee hinanii) and The Navajo Way of life (Dine yik'ehgo yigaalii). The home is the place of births, the center of special celebrations like a baby's first laugh, the center of kinlaalda (puberty rites of a young women), the center of weddings, the center of judicial process, the place where maintaining good health, happiness and harmony with relatives, friends, and natural surroundings are learned and reinforced through Hozhooji (the Blessingways ceremony) which is concerned with peace, and harmony.

The Navajo hogan is where theology, law and medicine are learned and reinforced. "In a Navajo ceremony, there is no way to tell what is healing and what is worship. Everything is both. Moral guidance is also an inextricable element of ceremonial practice."¹⁰

In developing curriculum for bilingual education, considerations regarding the cultural behavior differences need to be taken into account. For the Navajo child the following are some behavior patterns which are taught:

- 1) The child is encouraged to observe and listen very carefully. Verbiage is considered secondary to careful observation of natural phenomenon people and things in general.

¹⁰ Bergman, Robert L., Human Behavior, "Navajo Medicine and Psychoanalysis", p. 10 July, 1973.

- 3) Being able to understand the speech behaviors, values, and attitudes of Navajo elders.
- 4) Being able to demonstrate appropriate clan membership, privileges, protocol.
- 5) Being able to discuss Navajo Tribal government, current issues, organization, accomplishments and anticipated future developments.

In developing curriculum for bilingual education, serious thought needs to be given to the qualifications of teachers who will implement the curriculum. The Center for Applied Linguistics (1974) in its guidelines for the preparation and certification of teachers of bilingual/bicultural education in the United States of America states: "Teacher of bilingual/bicultural education should have the following qualifications:

- 1) A thorough knowledge of the philosophy and theory concerning bilingual/bicultural education and its application.
- 2) A genuine and sincere interest in the education of children regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, and personal qualities which contribute to success as a classroom teacher.
- 3) A thorough knowledge and proficiency in the two languages involved and the ability to teach content through them equally well; an understanding of the nature of the language the child brings with him and

the ability to utilize it as a positive tool in his teaching.

- 4) Cultural awareness and sensitivity and a thorough knowledge of the cultures reflected in the two languages involved.
- 5) The proper professional and academic preparation obtained from a well-designed teacher training program in bilingual/bicultural education.¹¹

In conclusion, we need to keep in mind that as we design a bilingual curriculum,

- 1) There needs to be continual review of the function of the school.
- 2) The community with the assistance of the school personnel need to articulate the intensity and goal of the bilingual curriculum, as in the case of the "both/and approach" established at Rough Rock, Arizona.
- 3) Curriculum designers needs to ;consider the goals of the community for its children, jiggling a multitude of logistic and spealized data, i.e. the calendar of the community, the importance of the home, the cultural behavior differences and the qualifications desired of teachers who implement the curriculum, all the while realizing the inevitability of further modification and refinement.

¹¹Center for Applied Linguistics, "Guidelines for the Preparation and Certification of Teachers of Bilingual/Bicultural Education in the United States of Arizona, 1611 N. Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia, 1974.